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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2017
TAGS: PREL PGOV OREP IZ IR AM TU
SUBJECT: TURKEY: CODEL MURTHA'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY DEFENSE
CHIEF GEN SAYGUN

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: DCHOD GEN Ergin Saygun briefed Codel Murtha on Turkey's struggle with PKK terrorism, the PKK's involvement in narcotics smuggling and organized crime, and the inadequate response of many European allies. On Armenia, Saygun stressed Yerevan's implied territorial claims on Turkey and its failure to respond to Turkey's conciliatory gestures. He judged that Iran will not give up its pursuit of a nuclear weapon and described Turkish concerns about an Iran-inspired "Shi'a axis" seeking to dominate the region. Saygun said Turkey is ready to help train and organize Iraqi security forces once the security situation stabilizes, but the Iraqis must request the help first. Codel Murtha described U.S. efforts to encourage the Iraqi government to take responsibility and requested Turkey's deeper engagement there, while appreciating Turkey's fight against the PKK and contributions to peace in Afghanistan and elsewhere. End Summary

¶2. (C) Expressing frustration with the inadequate response of some of Turkey's European allies to PKK terrorism, Saygun described how the PKK finances its activities by smuggling narcotics and engaging in other organized crime. Meanwhile, PKK terrorists operate in northern Iraq "under the auspices" of Masoud Barzani and other Kurdish leaders. Rep Murtha said he understood from his visit to Iraq that Kurdish officials are taking measures to restrict PKK activities and asked if Saygun had seen evidence of this. Saygun said he had not seen any change but noted that positive developments in other areas had resulted from President Bush's November 5 meeting with PM Erdogan.

¶3. (C) Saygun cited the Armenian independence declaration, constitution, and national symbols as evidence of Armenian claims on Turkish territory. He noted that Turkey had paid for the restoration of the Akdamar Armenian Orthodox church on Lake Van, equating its importance to the Armenians with that of the Istanbul Patriarchate to Greek Orthodox. Saygun complained that, while Turkey has opened Turkish Partnership for Peace facilities to Armenian students, Armenia refuses to allow entry to Turkish officers participating in NATO missions. Meanwhile, Turkish journalists have been roughed up in Yerevan.

¶4. (C) Saygun stressed that Turkey and Iran have no formal military relations but often coordinate their actions against PKK and PJAK terrorists. He said he is convinced that Iran will seek to develop nuclear weapons to support its attempts

to dominate the region by encouraging a "Shi'a axis" and controlling the flow of oil. He stressed the need to separate Syria from Iranian influence, asserting that Bashar Asad is struggling to get out from the shadow of his late father's advisors.

¶ 15. (C) Turning to energy security, Saygun warned that Russia seeks to control all oil/gas flows in the region, including internal distribution networks in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. He noted that the Russians are seeking to buy Austrian oil giant OMV in order to control the Nabucco pipeline.

¶ 16. (C) On Turkey-U.S. relations, Saygun expressed disappointment that so much of the bilateral agenda was taken up with "minor" issues, such as U.S. pressure on Turkey to recognize the "Ecumenical" Patriarchate, open the Halki Seminary, normalize relations with Armenia, and withdraw troops from Cyprus. We should raise our level of cooperation on larger regional issues, Saygun asserted, and work on managing divergent policies without harming our mutual interests.

¶ 17. (SBU) Codel Murtha thanked Saygun for Turkey's contribution to the war on terrorism, including in ISAF, and expressed understanding for Turkey's fight against PKK terrorism. The U.S. shares Turkey's concerns about energy security. All Codel members urged Turkey to consider what more it could do to help with reconciliation and rebuilding in Iraq, noting that the U.S. is bearing a heavy and expensive burden there. They also requested the GOT's help in getting Iraq's other neighbors to act constructively. Rep Murtha and other members stressed their efforts to keep the Armenian Genocide resolution off the House agenda and their belief that the resolution will not be reintroduced during

the term of this Congress.

¶ 18. (U) Codel Murtha did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before departing Ankara.

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